

Agriculture Element

Introduction

The open space lands used for crop production and animal grazing play a key role in defining the visual context of Fairfield as well as having an important economic impact to Solano County. The General Plan Land Use Element and the Open Space/ Conservation and Recreation Element contain a number of policies for preserving the hillside areas around Fairfield and agricultural lands in Suisun Valley and Green Valley. In addition, the City has a right-to-farm ordinance, and is bound by the terms of a 30 year agreement with the Solano Irrigation District and the Solano County Flood Control and Water Conservation District which prohibits extension of City services to, or annexation of, land in Suisun Valley.

California State Law requires that a General Plan address agricultural resources in a variety of ways. The location and extent of agricultural lands and resources must be addressed in the Land Use Element. In addition, the Open Space and Conservation Element must address the development and utilization of natural resources including soils, and the open space used for the managed production of food and fiber. The Agriculture Element is included as an optional element of the City's General Plan, to emphasize and strengthen existing City policies regarding preservation and enhancement of agricultural lands and activities in the Fairfield General Plan Area, and reducing or eliminating conflicts between agricultural and urban uses.

Goals

The goals of the Agriculture Element are:

Preserve agricultural and grazing lands within the General Plan Area which define the visual setting of Fairfield.

Recognize the economic importance of agriculture in Solano County by directing the City's growth away from important farmlands and prime agricultural soils.

Objectives, Policies & Programs

Objective AG 1

Support preservation of existing agricultural lands. (See Policy LU 2.1 and Objective ED8)

Policy 1.1

Preserve agricultural enterprises by supporting right-to-farm policies, and separating and buffering agricultural lands from new development areas. (See Policy OS 1.1)

Policy AG 1.2

Provide economic support for permanent commitment to agricultural uses. (See Policy OS 1.2)

Program AG 1.1A

Provide economic supports for growers: low interest loans, farmers markets, tax reforms, and water subsidies, in exchange for long term commitment to agricultural use. (See Policy ED 8.1 and Program OS 1.2A)

Program AG 1.2B

Support the Solano County agricultural preserve program and a strong county right-to-farm ordinance. (See Program OS 1.2B)

Program AG 1.2C

Encourage development of agriculture processing and handling industries. (See Program OS 1.2C)

Policy AG 1.3

Maintain current agricultural zoning in the area east of Travis Air Force Base, including the Jepson Prairie. (See Policy OS 1.3)

Policy AG 1.4

Permanently preserve productive agricultural lands within the Suisun Valley by continuing to direct new urban development away from the Suisun Valley. (See Policy LU 2.1, OS 1.4 and ED 8.3)

Program 1.4A

Where land is identified as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland on the most recent Important Farmland maps prepared by the California Department of Conservation is proposed for conversion to urban uses, the City shall arrange for preservation of an equal amount of the same class of farmland within the area. Such arrangement may be through fee purchase, purchase of conservation easements, payment of an in-lieu fee, or other mechanism.

Policy AG 1.5

Strongly reaffirm the City of Fairfield's commitment to the basic goals of the 1974 Agreement between the City of Fairfield, Solano County Flood Control and Water District, and the Solano Irrigation District (the "SID Agreement"), and actively participate in any local measures that promote preservation of agriculture adjacent to Fairfield. (See Policy OS 1.5)

Program AG 1.5A

The City shall, in cooperation with Solano County and the Solano Irrigation District, initiate and support an extension of the SID Agreement beyond its current expiration date of January 1, 2006.

Policy AG 1.6

What is Urban shall be municipal, and what is rural shall be within the County. Any urban development requiring basic municipal services shall occur only within the incorporated City and within the urban limit line established by the General Plan. (See Objective LU3, Policy LU 3.1, and Policy OS 1.6)

Policy AG 1.7

Annexation areas contained in the City's 1998 Comprehensive Annexation Plan which contain prime agricultural soils shall be given a lower priority than annexation areas without prime agricultural soils with the same land use designation or intended use unless: a) this would not result in orderly development patterns (i.e. pockets of prime agricultural soils surrounded by land developed with urban uses), or b) the annexation area is within an area designated for development by the General Plan, or c) the prime agricultural soils contained within the annexation area are not planned for urban development.

Policy AG 1.8

Annexation proposals should not be processed while there is an active California Land Conservation Act ("Williamson Act") contract(s) on a substantial portion, being 50 percent or more, of the subject property or until a cancellation has been filed with Solano County and less than five years remain on the life of the contract. Exceptions to this policy may be made under either of the following circumstances: a) for properties where development will result in the permanent preservation of substantial (50 percent or more of the subject annexation area) amounts of agricultural land or open space; or b) for those properties whose Williamson Act Contracts were protested by the City prior to adoption of the City's 1998 Comprehensive Annexation Plan.

Policy AG 1.9

Annexation proposals that are within one of the City's Open Space Planning Areas (OSPA's) that contain prime agricultural soils shall be first reviewed by the Open Space Commission for their review and comment.

Objective AG 2

Encourage the preservation and expansion of the local agricultural economy. (See Policy LU 2.1, Objective OS 1, Policy OS 1.1, Policy OS 1.2, Programs OS 1.2 A, 1.2 B, and 1.2 C, and Objective ED 8)

Policy AG 2.1

Cooperatively work with farmers, property owners, universities, colleges, and agricultural organizations and agencies to enhance the viability of agricultural uses and activities. (See Policy ED 8.1)

Program AG 2.1 A

Continue to sponsor the Downtown Farmers Market and other related activities that promote local farming and agriculture. (See Program ED 8.1 A)

Policy AG 2.2

Coordinate open space preservation and conservation programs with economic development programs to enhance agriculture. (See Program ED 8.2)

Policy AG 2.3

Development shall not encroach upon or consume productive cropland in areas such as the Suisun Valley. (See Policy OS 1.4, Policy OS 1.5, and Policy ED 8.3)

Policy AG 2.4

Attract industry that complements and supports the local agricultural economy. (See Policy ED 8.4)

Objective AG 3

Achieve a pattern of development that reinforces the City's desired image.
(See Objective LU 2, Objective UD 4, Policy UD 4.1)

Policy AG 3.1

Encourage the preservation of agricultural land surrounding the City and permanently preserve agriculture in the Suisun Valley. (See Policy LU 2.1, Objective OS 1, Policies OS 1.1, OS 1.2, OS 1.3, OS 1.4 and OS 1.5, Programs OS 1.2 A, OS 1.2 B, OS 1.2 C, OS 1.4 A, and Rancho Solano North Master Plan Area Policy 6)

Program AG 3.1A

In cooperation with Solano County, establish a permanent agricultural buffer between urban development in Fairfield and agriculture in Suisun Valley. The City shall seek to establish such a buffer through the acquisition of fee title, development rights or conservation easement(s). Agriculture and recreational uses will be allowed within the buffer. The City may choose to lease back to farmers any lands acquired by the City.

This buffer shall incorporate existing landforms and features, such as the ridges east of Mankas Corner Road and Clayton Road, and groves of trees so as to take advantage of these features to visually screen development from the Valley. If existing features prove inadequate, the development shall use trees, berms, and other methods to minimize visibility from the Valley. (See Policy LU 2.1 and Program LU 2.1A)

Program AG 3.1 B

The City, in cooperation with the County, shall establish similar buffers between productive permanent agricultural lands and development in other areas undergoing development. (See Program LU 2.1B)

Program AG 3.1 C

The City shall continue to work with the County to plan for the preservation of the hills to the west of Suisun Valley as open space. (See Program LU 2.1C)

Supporting Text

One of the underlying goals of the General Plan is to maintain and enhance the City's desired image through a well balanced pattern of development. The agricultural lands in the Suisun Valley and the grazing lands to the north and south of Fairfield play a prominent role in defining the visual character of the City. Further, intensive agriculture (row crop and orchard) plays a vital role in Solano County's economy, accounting for about 150 million dollars yearly in total value of production.

The City's agricultural preservation policies contained in the General Plan are broad and comprehensive. Having realized that the community's sense of identity and quality of life are closely associated with the natural setting surrounding Fairfield, the City has adopted numerous policies and programs aimed at protecting valuable agricultural lands around Fairfield from the rapidly increasing development pressures within the region.

The Environmental Impact Report prepared for the 1992 General Plan identified 2,734 acres of prime agricultural lands in Fairfield's planning area. Most of this land is located within Green valley and Suisun Valley. The 1998 Comprehensive Annexation Plan identified 361 acres of prime farmland in the City's Urban Limit Line. All of this land is located north of Travis Air Force Base within the proposed Fairfield-Vacaville-Solano County Greenbelt and the Travis Reserve Area.